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October 21, 2009

TO: Senate Committee on Children and Families and Workforce Development
Assembly Committee on Children and Families

FROM: Kimmie Collins
Legislative Liaison, Department of Children and Families

RE: AB485/ SB346 and AB486/ SB347

AB485/SB346

This bill makes the long overdue necessary technical changes to Wisconsin's Statutes to improve the function of child welfare and child care programs. This bill is a redraft of SB350 from the 2008 session that passed the Senate as a Law Revision bill.

It makes the following technical changes to the statutes:

- Changes the term "day care center" to "child care center."
- Removes redundant language such as language surrounding reasonable efforts
- Changes the language regarding confidentiality in the child welfare code to conform to the language in the juvenile justice code
- Corrects a reference which incorrectly references group home when it should refer to child care center.
- Provides termination of parental rights warnings for a parent when a child is placed as a juvenile in need of protection or services (JIPS) under ch. 938.
- Changes remaining references to child caring institution to residential care centers for children and youth.
- Moves the definition of neglect to the same section as the definition of child abuse.
- Requires TPR warnings at permanency plan hearings.

AB486/SB347

Congress has enacted many laws pertaining to child welfare that require subsequent action by all states. This bill contains the necessary changes required by to come into compliance with federal law. In early 2010 DCF will go through its federal review. As part of the review the examiners will look at the state statutes to make sure they contain the required changes from federal changes.

If this bill is not passed through the Wisconsin Legislature by December 31, 2009 DCF could lose a significant amount of Federal funding. In a review in Ohio, the state had to pay back \$8 million to the Federal Government.

This bill will make the following changes to come into compliance with Federal Laws:

1. Fostering Connections Act:

The Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act was created to help hundreds of thousands of children and youth in foster care by promoting permanent families for them through relative guardianship and adoption and improving education and health care.

- Require notice to certain adult relatives and others to inform those individuals when a child is removed from the parental home and provide information on how they may support the child or provide care
 - This language will mirror the language from AB298 which passed the Assembly on September 22nd. AB298 fulfills the requirements of the Fostering Connections Act and was a bill developed by the Legislative Council Special Committee on Strengthening Families.
- Require reasonable efforts to place siblings together, or if siblings are not placed together to provide frequent visitation or other interaction. Current law has requirements to consider sibling placements; this will also require reasonable efforts to make those placements.
- Require that during the 90 day period immediately prior to a child aging out of foster care that a caseworker must provide the child with assistance and support in developing a transition plan which includes plans for housing, education, health care, and work force supports. Current policy already requires that a similar plan to be developed during the 6 months before a child ages out of foster care.

2. Safe and Timely Placement Interstate Act:

To improve protections for children and to hold States accountable for the safe and timely placement of children across State lines, and for other purposes.

- Require that out of state placements be considered when appropriate at placement, during permanency hearings and when engaging in concurrent planning.
- Require that foster parents receive notice of all substantive hearings involving their foster child and that they have a "right to be heard" at those hearing rather than an "opportunity to be heard" as provided currently under Wisconsin law.
- In Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children cases:
 - Require courts to cooperate with courts in other states in the sharing of information.
 - Expressly authorize courts to obtain information and testimony from agencies and parties in other states without requiring interstate travel by the agencies and parties.

- Expressly permit courts to allow the participation of parents, children, attorneys and other necessary parties in cases involving interstate placement without requiring their interstate travel.

3. Child and Family Services Improvement Act of 2006:

Amends the Child and Family Services) portion of the Social Security Act (SSA) with respect to the promoting safe and stable families program.

- Amends part B (Child and Family Services) of title IV of the Social Security Act (SSA) with respect to the promoting safe and stable families (PSSF) program. Require that at the permanency plan hearing or review, courts or review panels consult with children in an age appropriate manner about their permanency plan and if the child is over age 15 and has an independent living plan, about the independent living plan.

4. Title IVE requirements:

The Federal Foster Care Program helps to provide safe and stable out-of-home care for children until the children are safely returned home, placed permanently with adoptive families or placed in other planned arrangements for permanency. The program is authorized by title IV-E of the Social Security Act. It is an annually appropriated program with specific eligibility requirements and fixed allowable uses of funds.

- Clarify that circuit court commissioners may conduct permanency plan hearings.
- Remove any time spent in a non-title IVE facility from the 15 of 22 months termination of parental rights (TPR) calculation which requires the agency to consider a termination of parental rights at that point, consistent with federal interpretations.
- Revise the requirement that a court make reasonable efforts to achieve the goals of the permanency plan finding if the disposition hearing occurs before the 60 day deadline for a permanency plan because until a permanency plan is completed there is no permanence goal.

5. Child Abuse Protection and Treatment Act (CAPTA):

Provided assistance to States to develop child abuse and neglect identification and prevention programs.

- Change provisions on drug affected infants to conform to CAPTA requirements that health care providers notify Child Protective Services (CPS) of an infant affected by substance abuse. Current state statutes require health care providers to make a report to human or social services agencies, but not necessarily to CPS.

6. Federal Licensing Law:

- Current state statutes do not specifically allow for the release of CPS information to private in-state or out-of-state agencies licensing foster homes or adoptive

homes. These background checks are required by federal law for licensing purposes. The bill amends Chapter 48 to clarify that CPS information may be given to private agencies licensing homes for foster homes, and domestic or international adoptive homes.

This bill also contains an amendment which moves the effective date of the child support pass through from January 1, 2010 to April 1, 2010. The effective date was included as a part of ACT 28 and will not be realized because of problems with the computer system.